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DISSERTATION

CONCERNING

MISLETOE:

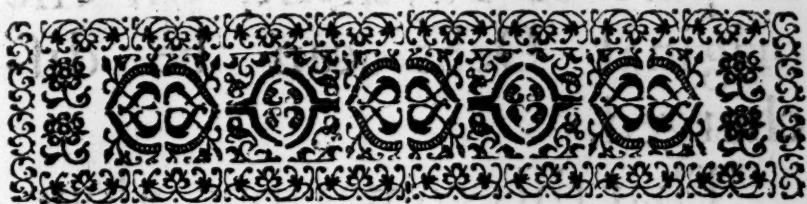
A most Wonderful SPECIFICK
REMEDY for the Cure of Con-
vulsive Distempers.

Calculated for the Benefit of the Poor as
well as the Rich, and heartily recom-
mended for the Common Good of Man-
kind,

By Sir JOHN COLBATCH,
a Member of the College of Physicians.

L O N D O N,

Printed for WILLIAM CHURCHILL at
the Black-Swan in *Paternoster-Row*. 1719.



THE
P R E F A C E.



Have been many
Years a Debtor to
the World, and since
I have not as yet been
able to pay off my old Scores,
to my own Satisfaction, the
following Dissertation comes
out by way of Composition:

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vi The P R E F A C E.

which I hope will be accepted in part of Payment, till the original Debt can be discharged.

That this comes out alone, is from an Impression that I have had upon my Spirits for some Weeks past, that it would be highly criminal in me to let another Mistletoe Season pass, without informing the World what a Treasure God Almighty has every Year presented to their View ; and that no body, at least very few, have received any Benefit from it.

The Article of *Convulsions* in the Bills of Mortality of this great City, is by much the largest

largest of any, very commonly amounting to about a fifth Part of the Whole ; and, as I have been credibly inform'd, happens principally amongst Infant Children: from whence it seems plain, that a Generous Anti-Convulsive Remedy is wanting. I have publish'd the Noble Qualities of this Wonderful Medicine, in the most plain and familiar manner, that thereby it may be rendred of more publick Use; and I am not without the greatest Hopes that People of all Ranks will receive Benefit from it.

I hope I shall not be blamed for the Earnestness of my Recommendation.

viii The PREFACE.

commendation of this Neglected, but Extraordinary Plant; because my only Aim in so doing, is to press People to the Use of that, which every Family may one time or other receive Advantage from.

The Performance is rough and unpolish'd; but I have chosen rather to suffer Reproach upon that account, than let another Season slip, which I am satisfied would be to the Detriment of many.





DISSERTATION

CONCERNING

M I S L E T O E.



HAVING some Years since had a very terrible Instance of an Epileptical Case in one that was most near and dear unto me, and which baffled all Endeavours that were used for his Recovery; it occasion'd me many sad and serious Reflections upon the Subject. As he

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was daily before my Eyes, so his Distress made the more sensible Impressions upon me. I had recourse to the most Celebrated Remedies recommended in all Ages, and the Assistance of my Friends most Eminent in their Profession.

Four or five Years were spent in fruitless Attempts, he every Year growing worse and worse, till at last he became Cataleptick : he would be seiz'd as he was standing, and continue in that posture like a lifeless Statue, without Sense or Motion. When he was so seiz'd, he was constantly laid upon a Bed or Couch ; his Fit would last some Hours : but I am confident, that had he been let alone, he would have continued in the same posture in which he was seiz'd, during the whole time of the Fit.

Being one day upon a Journey, I saw some Hazle-Trees plentifully stock'd with Mistletoe. It immediately enter'd into my Mind, that there must
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be something extraordinary in that uncommon beautiful Plant ; that the Almighty had design'd it for farther and more noble Uses, than barely to feed Thrushes, or to be hung up superstitiously in Houses to drive away evil Spirits ; and that the Mistletoe that grew upon other Trees, was capable of being as serviceable to Mankind, as that which grew upon the Oak.

Amongst many other Authors that have wrote concerning the Epilepsy, I had lately read *Marcus Marci*, his *Liturgia Mentis* ; the most satisfactory Treatise upon the Subject, as to Theory, that I have met with, and indeed to lay a Foundation for a Physician to practise rationally in the Cure of all Convulsive Distempers.

Having made the most strict Inquiry into the Nature of Mistletoe that I was capable of, I concluded, *a priori*, That it was a Medicine very likely to subdue not only the Epilepsy, but all

other Convulsive Disorders, upon the foot of *Marcus Marci's* Hypothesis. I mean the ordinary and common Mistletoe. The Praises of Mistletoe of the Oak had been proclaim'd for many Ages past, and none else esteem'd or regarded, as to any Medicinal Virtue.

The Youth before mentioned had indeed taken Mistletoe in small quantities in the *Pulvis de Guttetâ*, and other Compound Remedies recommended in Epileptical Cases; but when I reflected that Mistletoe was but one Ingredient amongst a *Farrago* of others, there was no determining from the Effects of those Medicines, whether Mistletoe were capable of doing any thing towards the conquering of so *Herculean* a Distemper.

In reading the scatter'd and imperfect Accounts of the *Druids*, formerly Priests and Philosophers in this Island and other neighbouring Countries, who were had in the highest Veneration by People of all Ranks; I conjectur'd

jectur'd that this Veneration in great measure proceeded from the Wonderful Cures they wrought by means of the Mistletoe of the Oak : this Tree being sacred to them, but none so, that had not Mistletoe upon them ; which Consideration also further prompted me to try common Mistletoe in its utmost extent. After I had seen some of its amazing Effects, I conclude that it was from this Divine Remedy that they had almost Divine Honours paid them.

But Mistletoe of the Oak being the only Mistletoe recommended as good for any thing, I was in great Straits how to procure a quantity of it ; for I did not remember in all my Travels to have seen any of it : so amongst all my Acquaintance, from that time to this, I do not know that I have met with above two that have.

This put me upon considering whether or no the Mistletoe receiv'd any Advantage from the Tree upon which
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it grew, or whether all Mistletoe were not the same.

After my Thoughts had been some time employ'd upon this Subject, I concluded that the Mistletoe of the Crab, the Lime, the Pear, or any other Tree, were of equal Virtue with that of the Oak, for the following Reasons ; and which has been confirm'd to me since by large Experience, which is beyond every thing else.

Now suppose that the Mistletoe of the Oak does surpass that of all other Trees ; yet from ten Years large Experience I find the ordinary Mistletoe to be the most Noble Medicine I ever knew : and since it's every where to be had, at least in this Island, it ought to be esteem'd as a great Blessing ; and if the other excel it, those that are capable of procuring it, ought to esteem it accordingly.

But if the Mistletoe were in any manner produced from the Tree upon which it grows, as the Gaul is from the
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the Oak ; then it might reasonably be expected that it should partake of the Quality of the Tree that produces it, as the Gaul does, having the same stiptick Qualities with the Acorn, or the Bark of the Tree. But as it's propagated by the way of Inoculating, or Grafting, it's quite otherwise.

An Apricock or a Peach grafted upon a Plumb-Stock, or a fine Apple or Pear upon a Crab-Tree one, will not produce Plumbs or Crabs, but Apricocks and Peaches, and fine Pears and Apples.

As far as I can learn, Mistletoe is commonly propagated after the following manner : There is a Bird generally known by the Name of the Mistletoe Thrush ; which Name, I suppose, it derives from its feeding upon Mistletoe-Berries during the Winter Season. From the Pulp of the Berries it is nourished, but the Seeds are discharged with the Excrement undigested. Now the Excrement being of a slimy nature,

nature, sticks fast to the Branches of the Trees upon which it falls ; and if there be any Crack in the Bark, there the Seed lodges itself, and produces a Plant the next Year. The Excrement being of the nature of Birdlime, and Birdlime, as it's said, being to be made of the Berries of the Plant ; I suppose gave rise to that very old Saying, That *Turdus cacat in sui Excidium*.

It has been often propagated by cutting a Slit into the Bark of a Tree, and sticking in a Seed. I have been told of one that has adorn'd his Trees with it, to make them delightful in the Winter-Season ; and surely a more beautiful Plant can scarce be seen.

Pliny says, That it is apt to exhaust and wear out the Tree upon which it grows : in which I am inclined to believe he was mistaken. The Reason, I suppose, that induced him to be of that Opinion, was, That it most frequently grows upon old Trees. Now I conclude, that it more frequently
grows

grows upon them than young ones, because the Twigs and Branches of the old Trees are more liable to Cracks and Accidents than young ones are : and being most commonly seen upon old Trees, he from thence concluded that they were worn out by it.

There seems however to be a Difference betwixt this Plant and all other Trees propagated by Grafting or Inoculating ; they being most certainly intirely nourished by the Juice of the Stock into which they are inserted : notwithstanding which, as is before observ'd, they change the Nature of the Juice, brought up by the Stock, into their own. But whether Mistletoe receives its full Nourishment from the Juice of the Tree, seems to me a Doubt. It's true, it continues alive during the Summer, but it does not begin to flourish and appear in Vigour, till the Sap of the Tree is fallen, or otherwise spent, and the Leaves dropt. Its Berries are full ripe, and

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in perfection, about the latter end of *December* ; and the more rigorous and severe the Weather is, the more vigorous and flourishing is the Mistletoe. Now considering that the Sap or nutritious Juice of the Tree is at this time in a manner spent, I am inclin'd to conjecture that it derives its principal Support from the Air. I have had some thoughts that it was no hard matter to try, by easy Experiments, whether this be so or not ; but being confin'd to the Town, I have wanted Conveniencies of so doing.

How it thrives in hot Countries, or whether it ever grows upon those Trees that never cast their Leaves, I am ignorant of.

Of all the antient Authors that take notice of it, which I have read, *Pliny* in his *Natural History* seems to be most full ; but what he says, is little to the purpose : and almost every body else recommends Mistletoe of the Oak in Epileptical Cases, but none of them
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give Directions how even that should be used in a rational manner.

Amongst the Moderns, the Honourable Mr. Boyle, in the second Part of his *Usefulness of Experimental Philosophy*, pag. 174. gives the following Relation.

‘ A young Lady of great Birth
‘ having been long troubled with an
‘ almost Hereditary Epileptical Dis-
‘ temper, and after having been wea-
‘ ry’d by Courses of Physick prescrib’d
‘ her by the famousst Doctors that
‘ could be procured, without at all
‘ mending, but rather growing worse;
‘ so that sometimes she would have in
‘ one day eight or ten of such dismal
‘ Fits as you and I have seen her in;
‘ was cured only by the Powder of the
‘ true Mistletoe of the Oak, given as
‘ much as would lie upon a Sixpence,
‘ early in the Morning, in Black-
‘ Cherry Water, or even in Beer, for
‘ some days near the full Moon. And
‘ I am assured, partly by the Patient
‘ herself,

‘ herself, and partly by those that
 ‘ gave her the Medicine, that though
 ‘ it had scarce any sensible Operation
 ‘ upon her, and did not make her
 ‘ sickish, especially when she slept upon
 ‘ it; yet after the first day she took
 ‘ it, she never had but one Fit. And
 ‘ this Remedy an antient Gentleman,
 ‘ who, being casually present when she
 ‘ suddenly fell down as dead, gave it
 ‘ her, professed himself constantly to
 ‘ have cured that Distemper with it,
 ‘ when he could procure the right Sim-
 ‘ ple, which is here exceeding scarce.
 ‘ And what further Experiments some
 ‘ Friends of yours have successfully
 ‘ made, I may elsewhere have occa-
 ‘ sion to relate.’

My most worthy Friend *Dr. Cole*,
 encouraged by the common Voice of
 Antiquity, and being farther prompted
 to it by this Relation of *Mr. Boyle*,
 was induced to try what it would do
 upon a Patient that fell into his hands
 by the Death of his former Physician,
 who

who for three Months had in vain been attempting his Cure. He relates the Case and the Circumstances of his Cure as follows.

‘ A certain Youth of a sprightly
 ‘ Genius, of about fifteen Years of
 ‘ Age, who at first had laboured un-
 ‘ der a Fever, from which he was per-
 ‘ fectly freed, was soon after attack’d
 ‘ with an Epileptical Fit, which was
 ‘ about three Months since: after a
 ‘ few days another, and after that with
 ‘ many, but without any regular Pe-
 ‘ riods. These Fits had so affected
 ‘ his Nerves, and brought such a
 ‘ Weakness upon all his Joints, that
 ‘ he could not walk without difficulty,
 ‘ nor lift the Weight of a few Ounces
 ‘ with his Hands, nor hold a Pen to
 ‘ write withal, in which he before ex-
 ‘ celled. To this Youth various Re-
 ‘ medies having before been given
 ‘ without success, I prescribed a Vo-
 ‘ mit of Salt of Vitriol; then a Purge
 ‘ or two with some Calomel. After-
 ‘ wards

'wards I took care that Mistletoe of
 'the Oak should be given him twice
 'a day, with some Cephalick Vehicle;
 'and the Apothecary had procured
 'the Mistletoe that was genuine: (Happy
 'he! for to this time I could never
 'procure any.) Proceeding in
 'this order, his Fits never returned.
 'The Mistletoe being continued to
 'this time, he sensibly perceiv'd a
 'gradual Restoration of the Strength
 'of all the Parts; so that he could
 'now not only walk, but run, and
 'write elegantly, of which I was an
 'Eye-witness. So that I have reason
 'to hope, that from the continued
 'Use of this Medicine, he may be perfectly
 'freed from his Illness, &c.

The Good Doctor was one of those
 that afforded his utmost Assistance to
 the distressed Youth before mention'd;
 but no Mistletoe of the Oak being to
 be procured, all other Mistletoe was
 look'd upon as despicable; and the
 reason why the *Pulvis de Guttetâ* did no
 good,

good, was judg'd to proceed from the Apothecaries making use of common Mistletoe in the Composition of it, instead of that of the Oak. But be that as it will, and let the Difference be never so great, the quantity of Mistletoe in that Composition is so small, as to render it of no effect. And as for the Mistletoe contain'd in the Anti-Epileptick Waters, the Great *Zwelfer* has remark'd, that it will not yield any of its Virtues by ordinary Distillation.

Mistletoe of the Oak not being to be obtain'd, I furnish'd myself with a large quantity of that of the Lime; the Trees in one of the Parks at *Hampton-Court* affording great plenty, at least they did so at that time. I order'd it to be gather'd at the latter end of *December*: The Leaves, Berries, and very tender Twigs, I got dry'd over a Baker's Oven, where there was a constant gentle Heat, and then had it made into very fine Powder, to be put into a Glass cover'd with
Bladder

Bladder or Leather, and kept in a very dry place. If it be not kept close and dry, it will contract a Dampness, grow mouldy, and be good for nothing: If it be scorch'd by the Fire in drying, it will also be spoil'd, and of no effect.

The larger Stalks must also be carefully dry'd and preserv'd, for Decoc-tions and Infusions.

Furnish'd with my Medicine, though of no Reputation, not being suspended upon the Oak; I was very impatient to see the Effect of it, and immediately went to work with it.

The distressed Youth had for five Years been labouring in vain, and every Month grew worse and worse; so that his Constitution both of Body and Mind were spoil'd to such a degree, that I could not be so presumptuous as to hope for a Cure: The utmost I could wish for, was some Relief, and to render the Remainder of his Life someway comfortable to him.

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From being one of the sprightliest of Youths at Twelve Years of Age, at Seventeen he was a perfect Mope, a most melancholy Spectacle both in and out of his Fits. However, bad as he was, having carefully inquired into the Nature of my Medicine, I went to work with it ; I was sure it could do him no hurt, if it did him no good.

His Fits in the beginning kept pace with the Moon, rarely having any but about the New or the Full ; but in Tract of Time he had them at all Seasons : so I began with him, without any regard to that Affair.

From the first I gave him half a Dram of the Powder, made into a Bolus with Syrup of Pioneys, every six Hours ; and after it a large Draught of a strong Infusion of the Stalks bruised, and sweetned with Syrup of Pioneys.

To my great surprize he had not one Fit from the time he began to take
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this Glorious Medicine for a Month or more, and never one Cataleptick Fit to the day of his Death. He continued to take it on for three Years, but after some Months, only Night and Morning ; and in the main, during that whole Space, he enjoy'd his Health tolerably well. But as his Memory had been almost intirely lost by the former Five-Years Calamity, so it was not judg'd proper to set him to any sort of hard Study, or employ him in any Business that should give him any trouble : Upon which score it was thought necessary to send him into the Country, to a good Air, with one constantly to keep him company, and to secure him against Accidents.

There he lived, with great Comfort to himself, and Pleasure to those he convers'd with ; and was sometimes capable of applying himself to his Studies. He would now and then have a Fit, but sometimes not one in three Months ; and those Fits he had,
 very

very favourable ones, which he had always Warnings of before-hand, so that he could be trusted on horseback.

At last he was taken ill, in a manner different from what he had formerly been, and died in about four and twenty Hours. I could not see him after he was dead, but desired that his Head should be open'd; having great reason to believe, that the beginning of his Illness proceeded from an unfortunate Blow upon the left Temple, in which Part he would often complain of great Pain, especially in the first part of his Illness, before he became stupid. And the Account I had of that matter, was, That there was a blackish Spot upon the *Dura Mater*, of the bigness of a Shilling, just under the *Os Temporis*.

It's true here was no Cure, neither could I expect one: I had the utmost Success I could reasonably propose to myself, which was to render the short Remains of a miserable Life com-

fortable and easy : And by so doing, to have a reasonable Opportunity of introducing to the World a most Glorious and Useful Medicine ; which has one peculiar Property attending it, That it is capable of doing the greatest Good in the most formidable of Diseases, and, I dare say, will never do any Hurt.

The Jesuits Bark is a most Noble Medicine in Fevers regularly intermitting, and in some other Cases : but I have frequently known the Misapplication of it, of terrible and fatal consequence. But for Mistletoe, I dare engage for it, that it will never hurt any one ; and tho it be so innocent, yet it will frequently cure Diseases, that in appearance (as the Great Dr. *Willis* represents them, in his Description of the Epilepsy, in his Tract *de Morbis Convulsivis*) do not much differ from those we read of in the Gospels, that were cured by the Redeemer of the World, the Eternal Son of God : But
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his Cures were wrought by a Word, and not by Medicines. Glory be to him, that in the absence of himself has created such Medicines for the Relief of the Distressed, as this I am treating of!

No one can think that I am so far divested of Reason, as to recommend this Medicine in the manner I do, there not being the least Prospect of Advantage to myself in it; but that I am sure of its Effects, from thorough Experience, and that I have all imaginable Reason to believe that it will prove of general advantage to the World: there not being a Family, to which it may not at one time or other be of the greatest use.

I have many times known about a Scruple of the Powder, mix'd with a little Black-Cherry Water, restore Children that have been agonizing with the most exquisite Convulsions that can be conceived; but then it has been repeated in less quantity very often,
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till they were perfectly well. I hardly ever knew it given to Children without advantage : A Cure is not always to be expected, but Relief is a great Blessing in such miserable Diseases.

It's good in their Gripes, either to obtund the Acrimony of the Bile or Pancreatick Juices ; and if they will not take it any other way, may be given in their Pap, Pannadoe, or Breast-Milk. Even to Infants there can be no Error in giving them too much, but the more they take, the better ; it being of a nourishing Quality, and no ways hot, or in the least tending to throw them into a Fever ; nay, is rather of itself a Febrifuge. I have often found it of great use in the dismal slow Fevers, attended with Convulsive Symptoms.

I have never, through the Course of my Practice, seen but two Persons labouring under that frightful Distemper called the *Chorea Sancti Vitae*, or St. Vitae's Dance ; or at least that might be
truly

truly called so. The first was before I knew the Use of Mistletoe : She had the Assistance of other Physicians besides me ; but in spite of all that could be done, she died miserably.

About three Years since, the second, a Girl of about Seven Years of Age, was brought to me. Every Muscle of her seem'd to be convuls'd ; if she were upon her Feet, she was always dancing, and throwing her Arms about ; the Muscles of her Face would be variously distorted, and her Head moving backward or forward, or from side to side, so as to be a most moving Object of Compassion. If she were in Bed, she was under the same Circumstances ; one being obliged to be constantly by her, to keep the Clothes upon her, and she had no Sleep. She took about two Drams of the Powder every day, and by that time she had taken twelve or fourteen Ounces, she was made perfectly well, and so continues. She grew better by that time
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she had taken it two days, and in a manner well in about a Fortnight ; but I order'd the Continuance of the Medicine, till she had taken the quantity before mention'd, to secure her against Returns.

I have an intimate Acquaintance, an excellent Gentlewoman, who had labour'd under Convulsive Disorders for twenty Years, and did not want the best Advice ; her Life was render'd thoroughly miserable : But by the Use of the Powder of Mistletoe for a Year or two, she is become perfectly well, enjoying the Comfort of Life as much as any one does.

I have known so many Instances, both in Young and Old, in Rich and Poor of both Sexes, some of whom had been many Years afflicted with Epilepsies, and other Convulsive Disorders, that have been either cured or received Benefit from this Divine Remedy ; that I think myself bound in Conscience to divulge the Use of it to
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the World ; since, as I have before observ'd, it is capable of doing greater things than ever I knew perform'd by any one Remedy, and I think it incapable of doing any Hurt.

Another principal Reason that has induced me to it, is for the sake of the Poor, the Meanest being able to procure it as well as the Rich, and that it wants little or no Skill in the Administration of it.

Whilst the Virtues of Mistletoe were confin'd to that of the Oak only, it was of little or no Use to the World, as not being to be procured. I have been five and thirty Years a diligent Searcher after it, but never could yet see one Sprig ; and as I have before observ'd, have never met with above two that had. If the common Mistletoe that is to be met with in every County of our Fortunate Island, is capable of doing as great things, as have ever been recorded of the Mistle-

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toe of the Oak ; I shall have that Pleasure and Satisfaction of Mind, which generally redounds to those that have the Happiness of being Benefactors to the Age they live in, which I have in every Part and Circumstance of Life endeavour'd.

But if from the common Voice of all Ages, and the modern Instances I have produced, Mistletoe of the Oak must still be prefer'd ; I do not doubt but every Oak in *England* may be made to produce Mistletoe, by the Method I have before propos'd. And perhaps the *Druids* took that Method to propagate it upon such Oaks as were for their turn. And when that can be had in plenty, it will be no great difficulty to distinguish whether it excels or not : But I am really of opinion, that all Mistletoe is the same, for the Reasons before alledg'd.

In this Dissertation I have carefully avoided entering into the Reason why Mistletoe is so excellent a Remedy in
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Epilepsies, and of consequence in all other Convulsive Distempers; but recommend it to the Use of the World from the large Experience I have had of it, which is the same way that the famous *Peruvian* Bark was usher'd in: and perhaps the Experience of future Practitioners may make that matter more clear, than at present I am capable of doing. Nay, should I attempt it, it would swell the Bulk, and of consequence the Price of this Dissertation, and be of no advantage to the ordinary sort of People, whose Benefit by this Publication I propose as much as the Rich.

I began with it upon a Rational Foundation, and the Success has answer'd my Expectation, even to my Amazement in some Instances. I don't doubt but others will try whether what I have said be true; and when they see that it answers their Expectations also, I hope it will exercise the fine Genius's of the Age, to draw

Consequences from it, that may be of great use.

As the Bark does sometimes want an Auxiliary, to enable it intirely to overcome an obstinate Quartan Ague; so I have sometimes found that Mistletoe has done better in some obstinate old Epilepsies, with the assistance of an Auxiliary, than alone.

A Dram of *Sal Martis* added to an Ounce of the Bark, will make that Ounce more effectually to cure an inveterate Quartan, than six times the quantity of the Bark alone will do without it: So I have sometimes known a Dram of *Assa-fetida* added to an Ounce of the Mistletoe Powder, and made into an Electuary, make it act much more powerfully than alone.

Gentle Purging, and sometimes Bleeding, are useful before the giving of the Mistletoe: but I have been for some Years afraid of giving Vomits, even of the gentlest sort, in Convul-
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five Distempers, from some terrible Accidents that have been like to ensue, from moderate Doses of Ipecacuanha itself; the safest, and perhaps the best Vomit, that ever was made known to the World, barely as a Vomit to cleanse the Stomach.

If the Plant be not dry'd, powder'd, and preserv'd in the manner I have directed, there is scarce any other way of keeping it, but that it will be rendered intirely useless. This I desire may be carefully observ'd by every body.

I don't doubt but even Mistletoe of the Oak itself, or what People have called so, has often unsuccessfully been given, from not being gather'd in right time; or if it has been so, either ill dry'd, or not carefully preserved afterwards.

From the Hints I have given, I hope others will be disposed to try this Medicine to a further Extent than I have been able to do: I have been
cramp'd

cramp'd in it, because it was not to be had in more than two Apothecaries Shops, that I could depend upon for its being regularly managed. But for the future, since it will put them but to very small Expence, I hope no Shop in the Kingdom will be without it.

If any one will be so good, as to communicate to me any, either Medicinal or Natural Observations, that they have already, or shall hereafter make, in relation to the Subject here treated of, they shall not fail of my most Grateful Acknowledgments.

